Milwaukee School of Engineering

INGENIUM

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WMSE: CENSORSHIP VS. MORAL STANDARDS

by Michael Trader

As many people know, WMSE is the alternative FM radio station based in the Margaret Loock Residence Halls. Many also know that recently (a week before christmas) "heavy metal" music was banned from being played at the station. However, most people don't know the events that precipitated this action.

Bob Betts, general manager of WMSE, stated that the heavy metal programs, traditionally held from 9 pm to midnight on weeknights, have been an intermittent problem for the past few years. "I had fired some disk jockeys in the past three of four years for playing things that were very obviously objectionable, and we thought we had the heavy metal thing pretty well in hand," says Betts. However, several weeks before Christmas, "a sudden rash of stuff" was played by disk jockeys during the heavy metal shows. J. Bryant VanCronkhite, director of college relations and special assistant to the president, explains what happened prior to the banning of heavy metal.

"I had received a complaint that some of the music being aired on the station

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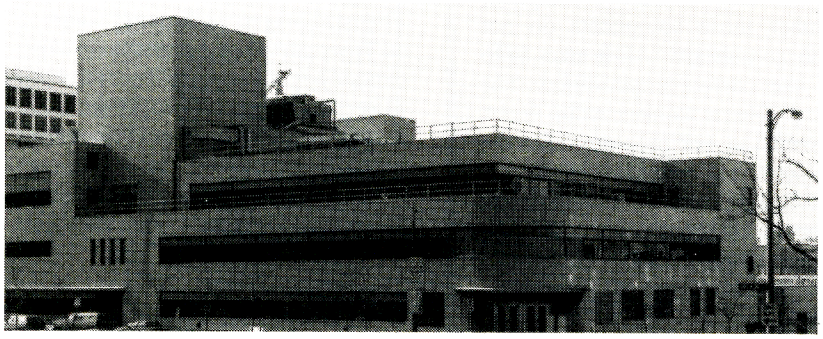

1000 Market Street: Problems with Pabst are patched up. (Photo by Jim Novitch)

MSOE FILES SUIT AGAINST PABST

By Dan Bodoh

On Tuesday, December 29, MSOE filed suit against Pabst Brewing for failure to pay $143,000 in rent on the Market Street Building, according to the December 30 issue of the *Milwaukee Sentinel.*

The suit was filed after MSOE had made contact with Pabst. Pabst would not give a reason for the failure to pay, and the president of Pabst, Lutz Issleib, failed to respond to a letter sent to him by the school's attorney.

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MESSAGE TO OUR READERS

Ingenium...Latin for "intellect, genius, knowledgeable," etc. But we're not so presumptuous to think that we know everything. Instead, we like to interpret ingenium as "understanding." That's what we see our mission as -- promoting understanding. This edition of the Ingenium marks a change, as the Ingenium now has two co-editors: Michael Trader and myself. We've got a lot of enthusiasm, and some pretty good ideas for the paper, and we're committed to truly transforming the Ingenium into a paper of understanding.

Understanding the administration's actions to remove heavy metal programs from WMSE is the intent of Michael Trader's article on page one. In the article, Mike finds out just what the administration did in choosing to remove such shows from the air, and more importantly, why they did it.

Creative Food Service has long been the brunt of many student complaints. Jim Tyler and Scott Morgan did some objective investigating into the structure of Creative Foods and how the food system is coordinated here at MSOE.

We'd appreciate any feedback on what we're doing to the newspaper!

Patrick S. Kennedy

Michael Trader

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was morally objectionable. I decided to find out for myself if the complaint was correct. That night I monitored one of our shows, and after listening to four records in a series which I considered egregiously objectionable, I called Bob. Bob and I decided that we would have to take action. We both came down to the station, talked to the disk jockey, and shut down the station temporarily. Then a joint decision was made that until we could examine the entire situation, all heavy metal music would be off the air."

That was that last time heavy metal music was legitimately played on WMSE. VanCronkhite, when asked to define egregiously objectionable, stated the lyrics were of satanic and sexually explicit themes. "Dead Girls Don't Say No", a song about necrophilia, was one of the offensive songs that ended the playing of heavy metal on WMSE.

VanCronkhite states, "Heavy metal music is not the only kind of music we're looking at. We're looking at all music that's being played. . .I would not want the people who enjoy heavy metal music to think that we are singling them out, such is not the case. We're looking at anything that goes over the air, it all must reflect the tone and the sense of values of the college." In a written statement VanCronkhite says, "music that is considered immoral or objectionable by either Bob Betts or myself, will be excluded from programming. Outside of FCC stipulations, the definition of immorality or what is objectionable is, of necessity, subjective. Since Betts and I are charged with accountability for station operations, we will use our discretion in all cases. The station must reflect the morality and sense of values set by the college." VanCronkhite stated that a sense ofvalues means, "a high sense of morals and a high purpose in life." VanCronkhite defines the guidelines for his moral standards as "a personal commitment to improving oneself."

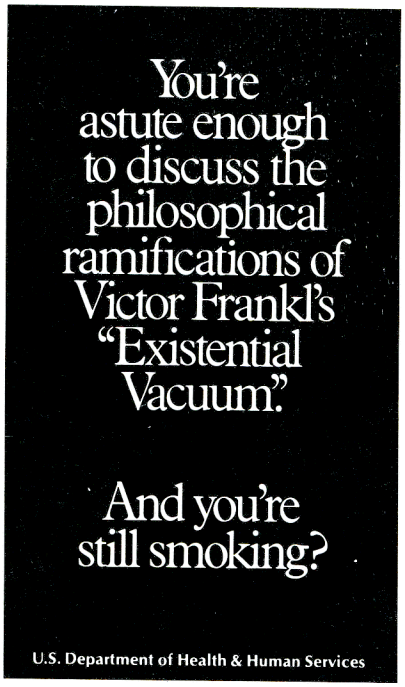
Many people are concerned about the possible return of heavy metal to WMSE. VanCronkhite stated that heavy metal music is not likely to return as a programming block, but certain elements might be allowed to be played along with other types of music. There is a problem of "gradation" or differentiating between heavy metal and other form of music, especially punk and hardcore. Some rap music selections have also been banned from the airwaves because they were "objectionable," says Betts.

As of this date, there is no "sanctioned" metal being played by WMSE disk jockeys. VanCronkhite states, "We have told the disk jockeys that we will not revive heavy metal as a block or segment of broadcasting. But, we are willing to consider playing individual heavy metal selections after we are assured in our minds that the selections will meet the standards we are asking the disk jockeys to impose upon themselves."

Some listeners show concern about what will be the next form of objectionable music. One concerned individual asks, " Will Reggae be the next form of objectionable because they talk about smoking pot?" "No thought is being given to making any immediate major changes in programming, but all programming is being examined to determine if we are utilizing our license in the best way," states VanCronkhite. ". . .let's not give the readers any incline that anything might not happen. . .Whatever can go over the airwaves, we're looking at, but we have no intention, at this point, of changing from our current style. . . .The fact that we suddenly made a shift and took off heavy metal, has not made any change in any long range strategic planning that we've done for the station."

Now that an example has been made out of the heavy metal music, the other dj's are being more responsible for what they play. The creed they are being urged to follow is "if its questionable, don't play it." VanCronkhite asks the disk jockeys to remember that, "they're responsible for upholding not only the station's reputation, but the college's reputation while on the air." Betts added, "We've got a pledge of cooperation from all the djs, and they understand that maybe this gave them an extra prod to be a little more careful." He added that "morale is high."

While many listeners have complimented VanCronkhite and Betts for their "decision", there are also a fair number of criticizers. Almost all, however, believe that VanCronkhite was well within his bounds to ban heavy metal on WMSE, as the school does own the radio station. But, the attack seems quite one sided, even though VanCronkhite states otherwise. "To ban a whole genre of music, reeks of censorship!" says one anonymous source, "in a society that is widely tolerant, we should have a widely tolerant show."


You're astute enough to discuss the philosophical ramifications of Victor Frankl's "Existential Vacuum."
And you're still smoking?
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Create cleanness. A litter bit at a time.